

WOMEN IN THE MILITARY

HON. LEE H. HAMILTON

OF INDIANA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, June 11, 1997

Mr. HAMILTON. Mr. Speaker, I would like to insert my Washington Report for Wednesday, June 11, 1997, into the CONGRESSIONAL RECORD.

WOMEN IN THE MILITARY

The case involving Air Force First Lt. Kelly Flinn has refocused national attention on the role of women in the American military. Women have become an integral part of our fighting force over the last 20 years. The percentage of women in the military has increased from less than 2% in the early 1970s to over 13% today. Women today serve in a wide range of occupations in the services, and have participated with distinction in every major military action, including the Persian Gulf War.

There are two main reasons for the increasing role of women in the military. First, our armed forces need women. Our national security would be diminished by excluding half of the talent and courage from the defense of the country. Prior to 1973 the military could rely on the draft of young men to fill positions in the services. But after the draft was abolished in the wake of the Vietnam War, the services have had to recruit women to meet personnel needs. Second, our society has insisted on greater opportunities for women in the workforce, including the military.

The U.S. military has, for the most part, succeeded in integrating women into the armed forces. The U.S. is the pre-eminent military power in the world today, and its fighting force remains the best-trained, best-equipped and most effective. There have, however, been challenges. The first set of challenges centers on the role of women in the military. Women have traditionally filled clerical, support and medical positions in the services, but there has been a push for women to assume new roles, including combat positions. The second set of challenges relates to sexual conduct among service members. The military has strict rules on sexual misconduct, but has arguably enforced those rules inconsistently.

WOMEN IN COMBAT

Current law gives the Secretary of Defense and the service secretaries discretion over whether women may serve in combat positions and over which assignments may be opened to women. In 1994 the Defense Department opened more than 80,000 combat-related jobs to women. Consequently, more than 92% of the career fields and 80% of the total jobs are now open to women. The Defense Department, nonetheless, continues to restrict certain combat assignments for women, particularly service in ground forces where the risk of direct physical contact with the enemy is high. The Air Force has opened relatively more combat positions to women than have the other services.

There continues to be debate about whether the services should open more combat positions to women or restore pre-existing law which barred them from serving in many such jobs. Those who support opening more positions to women argue that women service members cannot advance to the top positions in the military without combat experience, and make the further point that women who have the ability and desire should be given the opportunity to serve in such positions. In contrast, those who oppose women in combat contend that national se-

curity has been and would be jeopardized because women are not as strong or aggressive as men and their presence would impair the effectiveness of the fighting force.

SEXUAL MISCONDUCT

The sexual misconduct cases which have been in the news in recent months have fallen into two general categories. The first group involves cases of sexual harassment and abuse. The most serious scandal has occurred at Aberdeen Proving Ground in Maryland, where 12 drill sergeants have been charged with harassing or abusing female trainees. The services have adopted a policy of "zero tolerance" toward harassment, and have prosecuted the Aberdeen and other cases with vigor. Some in Congress are calling for segregating women and men during basic training to reduce the risk of misconduct, while others say such a change would mark a step backward.

The second group involves cases of adultery and fraternization, which generally refers to relations between officers and enlisted personnel. Adultery and fraternization can be crimes in the military, although a commanding officer has broad discretion in handling such cases. Disciplinary actions range from administrative remedies, such as counseling, to court-martials involving possible fines, demotions, and sentences. Several senior officers were charged with both in recent weeks, as was Kelly Flinn, who was also charged with lying and disobeying orders. The Pentagon says that such conduct erodes discipline and order. Critics contend current policy is too harsh, intrudes greatly into the private lives of service members, and is inconsistently applied.

ASSESSMENT

The military, like the civilian workforce, is adjusting to the large influx of women into its ranks. In many respects, the Pentagon has handled effectively this transition to a mixed-sex force. The U.S. fighting force, as demonstrated in the Persian Gulf War, continues to be the best in the world, and, overall, the military has adapted well to a changing society.

The military, however, continues to face difficult questions on the role of women in the armed forces. I believe women deserve the opportunity to serve in certain combat positions if they meet service requirements and qualifications for those assignments and if doing so is in the best interest of national security. I do think, however, that these changes should occur incrementally and with extensive consultation with military leaders.

The cases of sexual misconduct raise difficult questions. It is, of course, appropriate for the services to prosecute vigorously cases of rape and harassment, and take every step to keep our recruits safe. The rules on adultery and fraternization are problematic. The military is a highly structured institution, lacking many of the freedoms of the civilian world, and requiring unusual intimacy from close bunks to showers and a strong emphasis on discipline and morale. My impression, however, is that the rules have been arbitrarily applied and that some individuals are punished for behaving in ways others get away with. The military's purpose in dealing with these relationships must be to ensure the good discipline and morale of its troops, not to try to enforce morality. What is most important is that the rules be clearly explained, consistently enforced, and applicable to all, regardless of sex, race or rank.

SPECIAL PEOPLE PROGRAM OF
IBPOE OF W**HON. LYNN N. RIVERS**

OF MICHIGAN

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, June 11, 1997

Ms. RIVERS. Mr. Speaker, for the record, I would like to recognize the Special People Program of the Improved Benevolent Protective Order of the Elks of the World [IBPOE of W]. For the past 10 years, this program has recognized young persons with physical or mental challenges at the Annual Convention of the Elks Fraternity. This extraordinary program, fueled by the hard work of the IBPOE of W, recognizes the individual abilities and contributions of community citizens with special needs.

The Special People Program selects one youth as the annual Poster Child. Each year financial benefits, raised from donations and raffles, are given to this child and his family. In addition, the program continues its commitment to past Poster Children through annual donations.

This year's Poster Child is Marquise Taylor of Lexington, KY. Fifteen-month-old Marquise was born with a severe congenital heart defect as well as Down's Syndrome. In this particular type of heart defect, the separation between his cardiac chambers were not fully developed, resulting in unstable blood flow. Marquise underwent surgery at the age of 5 months to correct this defect and his prognosis is excellent. Yet Marquise still lives with Down's Syndrome, an incurable condition that will continue to challenge him as he grows.

I would like to congratulate the IBPOE of W for their outstanding community service and dedication to supporting citizens with special needs. I wish Marquise and his parents, Carlos and Roxie Taylor, all the best for the future.

SMALL BUSINESS: THE BACKBONE
OF OUR ECONOMY**HON. JAMES A. BARCIA**

OF MICHIGAN

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, June 11, 1997

Mr. BARCIA. Mr. Speaker, this country's economy is fueled by a diverse and broad group of smaller companies whose strengths lie in their innovation and flexibility. It is these companies that were recently honored at the 1997 Small Business Person of the Year Award in Washington, DC.

I would like to honor the sole Michigan recipient of this award, Wright-K Technology, Inc., of Saginaw, whose management team of CEO Robert Floeter, President John Sivey and Secretary-Treasurer Constance Kostorzewa was nominated for this distinction by Saginaw Future, Inc. Criteria for nomination and selection included sales and employment growth, staying power, local community commitment, innovativeness of product, and response to adversity.

One of the secrets of Wright-K's success is their strong belief that every single employee of the company is crucial to its ultimate productivity and strength. They value their employees, which comes through in company